

# What i See

**What I See Features... Baljit Ubhey OBE**, Chief Crown Prosecutor for London



My name is Baljit Ubhey, and I'm the Chief Crown Prosecutor for London. This means that I'm responsible for the majority of prosecutions that take place across London. In London we prosecute a whole range of cases, that might be from the lower end of driving offences, all the way up to murders and serious sexual offences: a really broad range of criminal offences.

## ***What did you want to be when you were young?***

When I was a little girl, I either wanted to work in the local sweet factory, or be the ice cream van lady, because I thought that eating ice creams all day would be a good way to spend my time! When I became a teenager, I seriously thought about becoming a landscape architect. I then discovered you needed science A Levels, which wasn't really my skill set, so I knocked that idea on the head. Eventually I ended up becoming a lawyer, and then the CCP of London.

## ***How did you find this role?***

The brilliant thing about going in to Law is that you can have A Levels in any subjects. I did Sociology, History and Psychology. One of the reasons I ended up doing Law was because apart from getting good marks, it didn't matter what the A-Levels were. I was drawn to law because it covers such a broad range of things: at one end [it's] very philosophical with Jurisprudence, and at the other end [it's] very practical, with contracts and taught law.

## ***What do you wish you had known when you were young?***

If I was going to give my younger self some advice, I would say “**be more confident, and take more risks**”. I’m very proud of what I’ve achieved: I’ve got a great job in the CPS that I absolutely love. I’m also mindful of the fact that I come from a very working class background- I went to the local state schools- but by working hard I managed to get a place at London School of Economics to study Law. I didn’t think I would get that place, even when I was applying I was very under-confident. **Being confident and taking risks always pays off.**

### *Taking Risks*

**I think that as a woman, taking risks is about putting your head above the parapet.** I think that for some people, that doesn’t feel like a risk at all; but for others, the fear of failure is very profound. Applying for big jobs, other people knowing that you’re applying, and the fear of failing: what I’ve learnt is not to fear the failure, and even when I have applied for jobs and been unsuccessful, I’ve learnt an awful lot from that process. Really going for things is about taking risks, and not worrying about the outcome.

### *How does where you live shape who you are?*

**One of the great privileges that I have, is that I understand different environments.** I’m of Indian origin, so I understand British culture and my own Indian culture. I work with people from different social classes: I grew up in a very working class environment. The ability to experience and understand different cultures first hand, and different contexts, I think creates a very open mind. In my job an open mind is very important, because my job is about fairness. So **my experiences, which some may see as disadvantaged, actually provide me with a great advantage in doing a great job now.**

### *What does happiness mean to you?*

**I would define happiness as being at peace with yourself and doing something you love doing.** I’ve always been interested in justice and helping the underdog... To have ended up working in the Crown Prosecution Service, which is about people and justice, is really important. Happiness is about having good friends, good family, a vocation you love and peace of mind.

### *What’s the best advice you’ve been given?*

I have been blessed by having a lot of wonderful people in my life who have given me good advice. From people like my big sister, who’s always encouraged me to go for jobs and not to worry about failing. There are certain things I wouldn’t have gone for if she hadn’t advised me. In fact, joining the CPS as a legal trainee- she encouraged me to take up the offer of the training contract, and twenty years later I haven’t looked back. I’ve also had fantastic role models in the CPS: senior managers who’ve believed in me, who’ve encourage me. I think **people who encourage, who give hope and recognise what you’re good at- they are the significant influencers your life.**

***What do you see when you look in the mirror?***

What I see beyond [my appearance] is **a very determined and courageous woman, and I'm really quite proud of myself.** I hope that doesn't sound arrogant, I don't mean it to, but I really do love what I do, I'm at peace with myself, so I see a happy and contented person.

---

PLEASE NOTE: This is a transcript from an interview featured on the What I See project website. Structural alterations may have been made, but care has been taken to maintain the true content of the interview. [www.whatiseeproject.com](http://www.whatiseeproject.com).